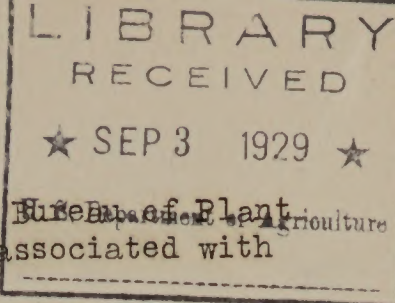


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A PROMISING NEW VARIETY OF STRAWBERRY



A radio talk by Mr. George M. Darrow, Senior pomologist, Bureau of Plant Industry, delivered through Station WRC and 30 other stations associated with the National Broadcasting Company, August 17, 1929.

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Did it ever occur to you that back of many of the delicious fruits that you enjoy lies a long period of patient, persistent work on the part of some plant breeder who originated or perfected the variety? That for every new variety of fruit which originates from breeding and is accepted as being superior to those of its kind already in use, thousands are subjected to careful trial and are discarded? But the introduction of a new, and better, variety of any cultivated plant is always an important step in advance in the improvement of our agriculture, as for example, the new Blakemore strawberry, which originated at the United States Plant Field Station near Glenn Dale, Maryland, as the result of breeding work which had for its object the production of better varieties.

In this breeding work scores of varieties from this and foreign countries have been assembled, studied, and crosses made. As a result of these crosses tens of thousands of seedlings have been grown and fruited. At present over 30,000 of these seedling strawberry plants are being grown at this one field plant station, no two of these seedlings are exactly alike, but out of this great number may come two or three, or perhaps but one, that may prove superior to existing varieties.

How are new varieties created did you say? It is this way. Plants of two varieties having specific characters that are desired in a new variety are selected and pollen transferred from the flowers of one to the flowers of the other. The seeds that develop from the berries so produced are planted and the resulting seedlings are the crosses. Every one of these seedlings, of which there may be a large number from a single cross, must be grown, additional plants allowed to form, and fruit ripened before their value can be determined. The difficult part of the work is to select from the many seedlings those that show most promise and it may take years to determine which are the best. All those that do not show promise of being superior are discarded immediately after producing their first crop of berries. The most promising ones are then subjected to many tests. They may be grown in hills and in matted rows; on light and on heavy soils; in widely separated localities and under different climatic conditions; the berries are tested for table quality, for holding or shipping quality, for preserving, for canning, and for cold packing. The point to be borne in mind is that a new variety is not retained unless it does show characters that are an improvement over existing varieties of the same type.

The Blakemore strawberry is the result of a cross made in 1923 using the variety known as Missionary as one parent and the Howard 17, sometimes called Premier, as the other parent. Although only one variety resulting from this cross, the Blakemore, is to be introduced next winter, other varieties are being given further tests with a view to their being named and introduced at a later time. This new variety is known to be adapted for growing throughout the region from New Jersey to North Carolina and is recommended for trial in parts of the South where Missionary and Klondike are grown. It is also recommended for trial in the southern part of the regions where the Howard 17 or Premier is grown. It has not succeeded in the Pacific Northwest.

In regions to which it is adapted the Blakemore is considered better than the present varieties as a market berry, being firmer and brighter in color. Tests made by the National Preservers' Association have shown it to be superior for preserving to any variety now ~~grown~~^{grown}. It is a dual-purpose sort and may be raised both for the fresh fruit market and for use by the preserving industry. It was named for Mr. Marcus Blakemore, the first President of the National Preservers' Association in recognition of his public service in connection with the preserved food industry.

The Blakemore strawberry is to be introduced by two cooperating nurseries and by the Coastal Plain experiment station at Willard, North Carolina, which is cooperating with this Department. A large stock of plants is being propagated by these concerns and it is hoped that after December 1 of this year that everyone desiring to test the variety can secure by purchase such plants as they wish from these three sources. The United States Department of Agriculture has no plants to distribute but will supply the names and addresses of the nurseries and the experiment station on request.

